

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW #464 -4

with

Ruth Ishibashi Yamaguchi (RY)

July 28, 1992

Pearl City, O`ahu

BY: Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Ruth Yamaguchi on July 28, 1992, at her home in Pearl City, O`ahu. The interviewer is Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

Okay. The last time I was here, we were talking about the day of evacuation, and I think, first of all, I know you don't know the exact date of that evacuation, but . . .

RY: No.

MK: . . . about when was it, you think?

RY: I had thought it was about two weeks after December 7, because we were looking forward to our first Christmas there. And now, with the war on, we weren't sure, you know, whether we're gonna be celebrating, but yet we were still looking forward to it, for our first Christmas. And but, before Christmas, the military men came, so we weren't able to celebrate any Christmas in the new home.

MK: So, on the day that the military men came, tell me what you remember about the day, from the time they came to your farm?

RY: Well, I remember two---they were dressed like officers because they were different from the rest of the soldiers that was in---you could see the truck full of soldiers, but they were dressed differently. But one man did come in with the rifle and a bayonet. And the two officers, that I thought it was officers, did all the talking. One had a clipboard, I remember, and was making all kind of entries, you know, writing things. And the other one was talking, asking questions, like I remember the first question was, to my father, "Are you Japanese?"

My father answered, "Yes." And they wanted to know whether we were citizens or aliens. My father said we were citizens.

But then my grandmother who was in the kitchen walked into the dining

area, which is adjoining the living room by big, French doors that you could see right through. And when they saw my grandmother, they wanted to know, "Is she an alien?"

And my father said, "She is an alien."

They also asked about other members in the family. So my dad, I remember, told them about my two sisters. And the other question was whether we had other relatives in Hawai'i. So my father said, no, he had no other relatives, just my grandmother. And they had made some kind of entry—that one guy kept writing things on this clipboard. And then, the next thing we knew, we were told, "You're to evacuate your property by sundown." On that day, to leave on that day, and to be out by sundown.

MK: And about what time did these military men come to your home?

RY: I remember, it must have been mid-morning, because we were all done with breakfast. But I know we did not have lunch yet, we didn't even prepare lunch. So I take it was sometime mid-morning, maybe about 10:00, 10:30 or so.

MK: And when your grandmother came into the room and saw your dad talking to the military men, how did she react?

RY: Oh, she did ask me who were they. So I told her, "*Heitai-san*."

And she noticed that they're Americans. She said, "*Oh, America-jin no heitai-san*" ("Oh, American soldiers"). And that was it.

Oh, and she wanted to know, "*Nani Otosan ni iuteta*" ("What were they saying to Father")?

So, I didn't want to tell her at that time, you know. I just told her, "*Oh, ano Otosan ni Nihonjin ka to iu oru*" ("Oh, they're asking are you Japanese").

And she said, "Oh." I guess she probably knew, because when she found out Japan attacked us, I didn't tell her too much at that time. I could see my dad really got worried and I got real nervous that, you know, they were gonna take my grandma away. 'Cause when they questioned about my grandma, oh, I was so sure they were gonna take her away. I went next to her, that's when she started to talk to me. I feel if I'm close to her, they won't drag her away. But that was one of the things that I was real worried about, and I'm sure my dad was worried too, that they were gonna take her away.

MK: And then, how about your mother, what was she doing at that time when the men came?

RY: She, I remember, she was standing next to my dad. But she didn't say anything, my dad did all the answering.

MK: And so once, you know, they were told that they'd have to evacuate by sundown, what happened then?

RY: So then my dad told me that we're gonna have to get out, you know, and blackout was in effect already. So, but then, his worry was where shall we go? And I think at that time he was told that you can go to the Japanese, Honouliuli Japanese[-language] School. But then, he told my mother that there may not be kitchen facilities to make formula and everything. And that was a big discussion going on with my mom. And---but in the meantime, he told me to start packing some clothes for my brothers and get some clothes ready, get some blankets. And I do know they were discussing, where shall we go? And by then, my mother was so upset, she's crying and she's in tears, "How will the girls know where we're going to be?" And she was worried that they might try to come home again, and find they can't get in. The house---we won't be home.

And so my dad said, "No, we'll take care of that later."

And---but in the meantime, they didn't tell me where we were gonna go. So I was trying to get my grandma to get her things packed. And she's saying, "No, *America-jin de den demo e. Dete doko iku? Kore wa uchi no ie da. Den demo e*" ("No, as Amerians, you needn't get out. You get out, where will you go? This is our home. You needn't get out"). But then she realized, she said, oh, she asked me if it's because we have to leave because she's a *Nipponjin*.

I said, "*Babachan, are de wa nai. Minna ga Nihonjin dakara*" ("Grandma, that's not it. It's because everyone's [ethnic] Japanese"). I said it had nothing to do with her.

But she said, "No, *watashi ga Nipponjin*, that's why everybody has to get out" ("No, I am a citizen of Japan, that's why everybody has to get out").

I said, "No, *Babachan, minna ga Nihonjin kara derannaran*" ("No, Grandma, it's necessary that we move because everybody's [ethnic] Japanese").

But she felt so bad. But she's saying, "No, you *ra wa America-jin de den demo e*" ("No, you folks as Americans, needn't get out"), you know. She said, "*Washi dake ga deru*" ("I alone will get out").

I'm trying to tell her, "No, *Babachan*, that's not it. Everybody must get out." That was a hard thing to convince her.

And so I got things ready. My mom packed some of her things, and I said, "Get the baby's things, I'll get my brothers' things." And my dad got his things. Oh, I know, my dad said just pack some of his things for him, that he doesn't know when he'll be able to come back so he has to go and feed the stock, you know, his livestock. So he told the boys, come and help him, so they all went with him to help feed the livestock. And then he got back and

he said to start, we would start loading the car. But *Babachan* would not pack. We're ready to go in the car, and *Babachan* came out with only the *butsudan*. She just came out carrying the *butsudan*. She didn't say one word. I said, "*Babachan*," I asked her where's her clothes and things.

And, "No, *iran yo*" ("No, I don't need them").

So my father said, "Go pack some of her things."

And she just held on to the *butsudan*. As I was---it dawned on me that, I know that was the *butsudan* I used to see when we lived in Wailupe. And so, I asked my dad—it was, I think, on [*this past*] Sunday, I said, "Dad, I remember *Babachan* walking out with the *butsudan*." I said, "I remember seeing the *butsudan* at Wailupe. Now, is that the same *butsudan* that you still have?"

He said, "Yes."

I told my dad, "Oh, that *butsudan* is real old then."

He said, "Yeah, that's the same *butsudan*."

I said, "Did she bring that home from Japan?"

He said, "No, it was made here by a cabinetmaker."

I said, "Oh." But I just wanted to make sure whether the *butsudan* that is in his room is the same one as I remember seeing that one.

He said, "Right, it's the same one."

MK: Were there, you know, other things beside the *butsudan* and clothes, and formula, and blankets that were taken out of the house at that time?

RY: Blankets and towels. But you see, we were under the impression that we would come back. So we didn't leave with too much things.

MK: Did the military men tell your dad how long you would have to evacuate your home?

RY: No, no. They questioned [*Ruth Yamaguchi's father*] about the farm, and he mentioned that he did have livestock. And he [*soldier*] said that, "You will have to obtain a pass and show it to the sentry at the gate anytime you want to come in. You cannot come in before sunrise, and you have to be out by sundown."

But you see, under those terms, I'm sure my dad thought that we were going to be coming back. But, of course, he made the decision not to take us to the Japanese school, because he wasn't sure about the facilities, and with the

sick baby. And so he said, "No, I'm going to take you folks to Kawano [*Toshio and Yoshio Kawano residence in Wailupe*]."

In those days, there were only one highway, that's Kam[*ehameha*] Highway. One lane going that way, one lane going to Honolulu. And I remember him saying that, there's so many military cars, even if they wanted to go to `Ewa, there were so many military trucks and everything. I said, "Are we going to make it in time?" Because I worried that what if we get caught in the blackout?

So he said, "That's why we have to leave now," you know. "We have to rush and leave early."

And yet, somehow, I felt (even if) we were going, it was going to be couple of days and we were going to come back. So that was about all we packed, mostly clothes, blankets, towels and things. My dad told my mom, "Take all of our birth certificates and everything, all the papers that we might need."

So those legal things, she did pack up. That's why we have our birth certificate and things, the original ones. And he said, "Anything important in the paper, take it."

But I was so sure that we were gonna go back. And that's why, I think, we didn't think anything about leaving a lot of the things in the house.

MK: So what kinds of things did you folks leave?

RY: All our furnitures, appliances, books, because there were so many of us kids, we had a lot of books. And the kids' toys. I remember I had a box full of childhood things, because I would *monku* all the time, my parents made sure that if one got a necklace for Christmas, three of us got it, in different colors, so we won't bicker which one is ours. And so, if there were---one year, I remember, we were given porcelain dolls. At that time, it was porcelain dolls with rag body, but arms and legs and face made out of porcelain with old-fashioned clothes. We had that, and there were lot of childhood things, you know, that girls collect. And I remember, I treasured that box so much, I didn't want to leave it outside. I took it inside the house, in my room. And I would look through it, and I would not allow anybody to touch it. But I thought, oh, I better not take that, because it's important that we take only what we need. And I said, "Oh, when we come back, the box will still be there."

But in my greed for all those things, we lost it all. 'Cause there were lot of things piled in boxes outside the house. And my mom and I would go through the boxes as we needed it. Oh, we need to find something, then, we would look through, "Okay, shall we take this box in?" Each time we would do that and unpack. So there were a lot of boxes on the outside, yet there were things on the inside that---I remember the boys had a Lionel train set. That was in the inside so they could play. So there were a lot of things of our

childhood things, yeah.

MK: But then your mother lost a number of things in the house, yeah.

RY: Yeah. Besides all the things that was listed on the document, well, there were more things taken from our old home, like her *tansu*. She had a nice *tansu*, and, I guess, that was the only connection with her parents, you know, like, her stepmother made sure she had a *tansu*. So she treasured that *tansu*, but she lost the *tansu* too, with all the things.

MK: And so you---the only things you had were the things that you took out of house on that evacuation day and the unpacked boxes that you didn't bring into the house. So when was it that you got to get all those boxes that were on the outside? Were you able to get those boxed items later?

RY: Now, on the outside, there were a lot of dishes of my grandmother's, things that she brought from Japan. And, for me, I guess, it wasn't that important, to take those things inside. You know, that's a real child's mind, those things are not important. The other things were more important to take in the inside, so I tell Mom, "Oh, we'll take this later."

So, *Babachan's* things from Japan were all in those boxes, and lot of plates and there were lot of pots and pans that we didn't need to take all of 'em in the house. There were dishes and some of *Babachan's* kimono and things, *obi* and things. See, she might have treasured that, but for me, it wasn't important, you know. And I would tell *Babachan*, "I'll get to that later," you know. And, like my mother's kimonos and things. But those were on the outside, and in a way, I guess it balances out. We lost all the childhood things, and yet, we had things that belonged to my grandmother, that would be now, you know, family heirlooms. My mother's kimono, with the *mon*. *Babachan's* kimono with the *mon*. And we found pieces of *obi*.

MK: So those things that were boxed outside, you were able to retrieve after you folks moved to the Kawanos'?

RY: Okay. Now, we had gone to the Kawanos' [*home*] and my dad was concerned about the livestock, the farm. And so he said he must get back with the group that's, with the rest of the farmers at the school. But he just couldn't make it in time, it was too late. So my mother told him, "No, don't start now," he's gonna get caught in the blackout.

So he started back, early the next morning. And he was able to get the pass to get back into his farm. But he would leave before sundown again. But within a week, I think it must have been about a week later, he came with a car full of things, with all those boxes [that were outside the house]. But then, also he came with the bad news, that---and he told my mom that the house is being occupied by the soldiers.

My mother couldn't understand, "What do you mean the house is occupied

by the soldiers?"

He said, "The soldiers are living inside of the house."

And she said, "Well, what about our things?"

And I know he really hesitated to tell (her), he says, "The soldiers said anything inside of the house cannot be removed." He cannot remove anything that's inside of the house. So he said he cannot get anything inside of the house. And that's why he said all the boxes outside, he (was able to get and) brought a carload full. But then that news was already devastating to Mom. I thought she was going to collapse, she just went down to the floor and that was that, (her) tears (were) coming down and she just couldn't say anything.

After that, Mom really, really changed. Mom wouldn't talk, Mom wouldn't eat. That's the hard part, you know, I can just see her when she received that news. But my father also had a hard time telling her the news. I thought to myself how difficult it must have been for him to break that news. And when he saw how my mom took the news---'cause I was listening in and I just couldn't believe what he's telling us. I said, "How can it be? You know, they wouldn't do that." I thought to myself, no, the Americans don't do such a thing. But when my father---each time he came, he just brought only the outside things. I figure, well, it must be true. But then I told my mother, "No Mom, I think it must be only for a while." I said, "When they move out, we can go back and we'll get our things."

But it was already too late. Mom, no matter what you say, she wasn't listening, or she didn't care. And I knew Mom was sick already. 'Cause she just wouldn't eat, she wouldn't talk. When February came, I had gone to school, so I didn't know what went on during that time, and Miyoko [Kawano], I think, being the compassionate person she is, she kept a lot of things away from us children. Fifty years later, she tells me that, "Oh, your mom suffered a nervous breakdown."

I knew Mom was sick, when no matter what, I would talk to Mom, she looks at you, but she's looking past you. And she would carry the baby but she just carry the baby and just rocks and rocks the baby. And Miyoko would, you know, try and relieve her and Miyoko would try and get her to eat. I would try and get Mom to eat, but she just wouldn't eat. Miyoko is the one who got her to eat. But then, Miyoko(-san)'s son tells me that several times Mom just left the baby—which was unusual, that she would never, ever do that in her right mind of state. But I didn't know that she had a nervous breakdown, she was suffering that. And Miyoko tells me that she just left the baby and walked out of the house. She said when she went looking for my mom, she cannot find Mom. And only to find out that she see Mom walking down the road. And there's a long, long private road to their home because (from) the junky road you have to go down quite a bit in the driveway to get to their home. She had gone out of that area from the property, onto the road, the junky road, and

she's walking away. And Miyoko tells me she had to run after her, and, "Where are you going, Susoe-san? Where are you going?"

She says, "I'm gonna go visit friends."

And I guess Miyoko knew that she doesn't know what she's doing. And she would talk her into coming home and bring her back. But that must have been taking place while I'm at school. But I do know something was wrong with Mom. She wouldn't talk, she wouldn't eat or anything. And somehow, you know, even when I went to school, oh, it kept bothering me. I couldn't concentrate in school. My mom was always (in my mind), "I wonder if Mom's eating. I wonder if Mom's all right." And somehow, no matter how much I liked school, I just couldn't concentrate. I couldn't concentrate what the teacher is saying, what is going on in the class. And I know I was doing real bad.

The only time I found relief, would you believe it, [*was during air raid drills*]. All the schools [had] these trenches dug in the school grounds. And there would be drills. When a certain alarm went on, you're to just get out of the classroom and not run, but walk fast and get to the trenches and jump in there. Would you believe it, I found relief in doing that? You know, just getting out of the classroom, going across the fields, and just jumping into the trenches. And the trenches are all dirt. And you're gonna come out sometimes dirty and everything, 'cause everybody's gonna jump in, you're gonna have to scramble in. They tell you to crouch down, crouch down. And all the dirt falling down on you. And when time to get out, you know, you're gonna have to scramble out of it, so you('re) covered with (dirt). But somehow, I used to find relief in those drills. And I don't know why, maybe it was to just release my frustration or what. 'Cause toward the end of the school day, I would think, oh, I wonder how Mom is gonna be (all right) today. It was always on my mind—I wonder if Mom will talk today.

MK: She literally did not talk for a while?

RY: Mm hm. Sometimes when the younger kids would go crying to Mom, she would comfort them. And she would ask me to go to give them a drink or something. But she was in a real bad state for a while. But fifty years later, Miyoko tells me, "It's because your mother suffered a breakdown."

So I'm thinking now that Yoshi Kawano, her husband, was real good to my father and (they were) good friends. So it sounded as though they had taken her to a doctor, and that's how they found out. But I told my sister, I gave credit to Miyoko, that she did not burden me with that. Fifty years later she tells me that.

MK: So this Miyoko-san is Miyoko Kawano, yeah?

RY: Miyoko Kawano.



MK: And she's a member of that family that you folks went to live with?

RY: Yeah.

MK: So when your dad was told that he'd have to evacuate the family, took the whole family to the Kawanos' home. Where was their home?

RY: It was in that Hind-Clarke Dairy Homestead, in our old neighborhood. The only thing was they lived further into the valley. And Yoshi Kawano worked for Hind-Clarke Dairy. But I do remember the brother worked somewhere else, for a private company, and Miyoko did say that's right. And they had gotten that housing rent-free because of Yoshi Kawano working for Hind-Clarke Dairy. Mr. Hind was very generous (and) anybody that worked for him got free housing. But the rest of the family worked elsewhere. My dad told me that they paid very small amount. They paid just a real small amount per month to rent the home.

MK: And so Mr. Kawano was a good friend of your dad's from the time they were working together at Hind-Clarke.

RY: I think they knew each other before that, and they had worked for the dairy together. And I do remember they used to go fishing together a lot. They used to go fishing a lot and they used to always stop by, and so they were good friends.

MK: And the Kawanos, how big was this family that you went to live with?

RY: Now, Yuki-*chan* and Toshi-*san*, that's husband and wife, they had one son and they had four girls of their own. Then there was *Jichan* Kawano, father of the two brothers [Toshio and Yoshio Kawano]. Then Yoshi and Miyoko and their baby, Eddie. Then, my grandma, my mom, me and my four brothers moved in. I remember, if Mom needed formula for the baby, Miyoko always got up, (too). She said because she knows her way around, although they had blacked (out windows) for the blackout. But I do remember every space, even in the kitchen area, was taken. That's why they didn't want us to go around. We slept more with Yoshi Kawano [and his family], they had a large (room) of their own. And we slept in there. I remember one time that I had to get up, you couldn't even walk around in the kitchen without stepping (on) people. And I always thought that, oh, the Kawanos, the other Kawanos, must have all the kids sleeping there. And by sunrise, everything would be cleared so you don't see anybody else.

But Miyoko tells me now, way down in Wailupe there used to be a [U.S.] Coast Guard station. I understand part of it is still there. And I do remember that, but the people around that area, around that station, that was close across from the highway, from the beach, also had to evacuate (at) night. And Miyoko-*san* tells me all the Okadas and some of the other, I think, Sumida or somebody else, all the neighborhood there had no place to go at night, they all came over to the Kawanos' to sleep. And it didn't dawn on me

how can all the space be occupied, I was sure that kids were sleeping in the living room area. But every space that you could find was occupied, with bodies sleeping. She tells me it's because all those people came to sleep at their house at night. She said, "You folks never got to see them." Because they would come way after, before the blackout, but we were already in the other portion of the house where Yoshi and Miyoko would be in. Because to make sure that everybody is in, we were all in there already. And she says, she said, "That's why you folks never got to see the other people."

But I do remember bodies and bodies on the floor. And I remember seeing that because I wanted to get a drink of water and I said, "Wow, where am I gonna step? Oh, there's somebody there." And finally, that one time was enough, I gave up. I said before I step somebody, I'm just gonna not drink any water, and I went back and I never ventured into the kitchen area after that.

But Miyoko tells me it's because the Okadas and the Nakanos and everybody else came to sleep at that house at night. And early the next morning---but they never stayed around. I guess at sunrise, they just left to go to their homes or to their property.

MK: So they never ate there or . . .

RY: No.

MK: . . . bathed there.

RY: No, no. No. They probably did everything before they came over and they just had them sleep there and then we never (see) them at breakfast time or anything. But I do remember so many (people). I said, "I didn't know that the Kawanos made the kids sleep in the kitchen."

And they said, "No, no, that wasn't the Kawano kids." It was the other people that came to sleep who could not stay in their properties. She said there must have been about four different families that came to sleep.

And now it makes sense why every---and my mother kept telling my sister [*Helen*], "No, there is no (room for her)."

And I remember my sister saying, "That's okay Mom, I'll sleep in the kitchen."

So my mother must have known there were people there. She said, "No, you cannot stay. You cannot stay. You have to go home to the Hinds. There's no room."

And that sister cried. And I remember she used to cry and go home. And after that I would see Mom crying. (My sister) doesn't know why. I remember her saying she'll sleep in the kitchen. But my mom said no. It was because even

the kitchen, every space was taken. And they had this long table, a long table with benches for us to eat. And they just pushed the benches inside and there were people around, sleeping around that table too, the dining table. And now it does make sense why my sister Helen (could not) stay over, even if she wanted to sleep in there. My mom said, "No, there's no room in the kitchen too."

And I remember one time, I told my mom, "No, I'll just push the boys sideways, and I'll sleep there, and she can sleep with me."

She said, "No, no, no, no." She knows it's overcrowded as it is. So she said, "No, no, no. You have to go home. You have to go home."

But that's why there were so many bodies. I remember them. And I never, ever got up after that, no matter how thirsty I was, because I was so afraid I'm gonna step on somebody. But I thought it was part of the Kawano family, but it wasn't.

MK: And I think you mentioned one time that when your sister asked to stay and your mother had to turn her away, your sister cried and . . .

RY: Yeah, she cried. She cried, and I remember that she says that Mom didn't love her. But that wasn't so, that's why my mom cried, I think, after my sister went home. But I guess my sister, probably she felt rejected, and she didn't want to feel rejected again, so she didn't ask (again). For a long time she didn't ask if she can sleep again. And I remember one time, she says, "Can I sleep with you?"

I said, "I have to go and ask Mom."

She said, "No, never mind." And she would go home.

MK: And your sister, you said she was with the Hinds. What was she doing? She was working for . . .

RY: She was working for the Hinds, and in the beginning I thought that she was gonna go to school, but then she dropped out and she was working for the Hinds full-time. The Hinds had a big, big home, it's still standing on Kalaniana'ole Highway.

MK: You know, with the Hinds, Hind-Clarke Dairy, having homes for their workers and everything, did your father ever consider asking the Hinds for some assistance in finding an empty home or a place for the family, since he had worked for them in the past?

RY: I'm sure he would have asked, but there was no homes open. There was just so many houses and I do know all of 'em was occupied. I'm sure Mr. Hind would have helped, 'cause he knew that we were all together with the Kawanos, and he was very good to my sister Helen, so I'm sure they would

have. But during the war, housing got to be very scarce, with all the military people. And it wasn't (only) the military people occupying the homes, but it was mostly the defense workers. And with the martial law, the defense workers had high priority, I remember that.

MK: And, you know, the Kawanos' home that you moved to, how big was it?

RY: I remember the other Kawanos had two bedrooms and there was a large living room, and there was a dining area, you know, with that long table and the long bench, and then there was a kitchen area, small kitchen area. And then there was a walkway, I remember. It's a covered walkway, it's like a hall. But then, in a little cubicle, there was a toilet. And then, Yoshi and Miyoko had this---gee, in those days, a large room wasn't that large, you know. Maybe from that post to about here [*approximately 144 square feet or smaller*], you know. That was their quarters and both of them shared the dining and kitchen, cooking and everything else, they shared that. But that was their room and Miyoko and Yoshi had put us into that room. So it was crowded.

MK: So how did you folks manage in terms of eating, using the bathroom, washing up? How did you folks manage?

RY: (Chuckles) With that many people and one toilet, naturally I used to tell my brothers that if it's only to go *shishi*, there was wooded areas in the back, so I taught them to go there. And if they had to use the bathroom, that they cannot be dilly-dallying. And the brushing of their teeth too. I remember there was a sink somewhere outside of the, by the toilet entrance. But everybody cannot be using that, so I would tell them, "You have to go in the yard and open the hose and brush your teeth and rinse your mouth out."

And to take a bath, it's just a *furo*. And you know that everybody cannot be having a hot bath before blackout and everything. So what I did was, early in the afternoon, while the sun was still out, bathed the boys outside in the yard, with a garden hose. And they thought that I was the meanest sister that lived. And I remember Tom, he didn't like that, so he would run off. And it was a job to catch him, he's real fast and he would run in the backwoods. And so I used to tell my other two brothers, when it's almost bath time, you folks know, just hang on to him. And that's the way---and he was always, "I'm gonna tell Daddy on you. You so mean, I'm gonna tell Daddy what you did to me."

He used to always come out with that. And when you're young and you have the responsibilities of your brothers and everything, you're worried about your mom and the baby, it gets to a point where, you know, you get so angry. And one day, I think, I just lost my temper, I told him, "That's right, Tommy, when Daddy comes, you go and tell him. You go and tell Daddy how mean I was, what I did."

'Cause he kept telling me every day, "I'm gonna tell Daddy, you made me

brush my teeth outside. I'm gonna tell Daddy that you, the kind of bath you give me, you know. Cold bath outside."

So I told him one day, I said, "You do that. When Daddy comes, you tell him what I did. You tell him how mean I am. Now don't you forget, you do that." And would you believe it, he stopped it.

(Laughter)

RY: He stopped coming up with that. And I used to feel sorry for them, so I had to tell them, you know. I said, "You folks have to really help because Mom is sick and with this many people, it's hard."

But then, every now and then, they would break down and cry. And they said, "Why, why do we have to always wait for the second shift to eat? Why do we have to always take a cold bath? Why isn't Daddy here?"

Sometimes they notice that Mom wouldn't pay attention and . . .

MK: Okay.

RY: For them, they thought that Mom loved only the baby because she was constantly carrying him. But it was because Kent's body was real cold all the time. He didn't have the resistance and his body temperature was always cold. And I noticed that, so Miyoko would say, "It's better to carry him all the time to give warmth." That was the reason why he was always being carried. But when you're young and small, you can't understand that.

And I used to talk to my brothers, "No, Mom loves you and I'm not trying to be mean, but we all have to try our best because there's too many people." But it's hard to get that across to kids.

MK: And then, like, was there sufficient food and things like that . . .

RY: No, that's the . . .

MK: . . . for you?

RY: That was another thing, with the war on, there's food rationing. There were lot of things they can't get hold of. My dad tried his best, whatever he could buy at the `Ewa Plantation, or whatever he could get, he would bring it over. But that was a problem because, with the food shortage and that many people to feed. So Mom would always say, she would always say if the boys had enough to eat. And I noticed she would always give up her food. But then, in turn, I noticed that Miyoko always gave up a portion of her food to feed Mom. That's how much she took good care of Mom. Mom worries about the boys so she would give part of her food to the boys. And then Miyoko sees that and she would give part of her food to Mom. And that was one part I always noticed, (tell) the boys, I said, "I will give you portion of my food, but

don't ever take Mom's food."

"No, but Mom loves me. Mom gave me her food." It was always Tommy that would come up with that.

And I said, "I know but Mom is sick and Mom needs the food."

"No, Mom's not sick. I talked to Mom."

Of course she's not gonna tell that she's sick. You know, she would always try to comfort them. But no matter what, the boys just could not understand. And if they understood for that one day, they would forget the next day. And I would tell, "Remember what I told you yesterday?"

"Oh, I forgot."

And you know, kids being kids, they will remember some things but they would easily forget the other things. So it was hard. My dad, being a farmer, the farmers were given priority. They had a lot of gas [online] coupons. And so Dad would always make sure that the Kawanos had enough gas, and he would say to use the coupons because he knows that if in case of an emergency, where they have to get the baby to the doctor, that they would need the gas. And that was another problem, the gas rationing. But my dad said he had enough. They were issued enough gas because they were farmers. But so he always made sure whoever needed gas, he shared his gas coupons. Even within those evacuated farmers. If one family needed gas, I think they all shared their gas coupons, whoever needed it. So that's another reason my dad said that, to make sure that he has enough gas to come and visit, he would not be coming too often, because he would be using a lot of his gas coupons just to come to visit us, and going back took a lot of gas too. So he told me that try and do our best because he won't be using these gas coupons that way, and he wanted to make sure that there was gas coupons for somebody who needed it.

MK: You were saying how hard it was for your brothers especially, yeah, to deal with the situation. I guess they had to change school, too. They had to change from `Ewa to . . .

RY: Right. The two brothers that went to school had to be re-registered in town again. So I remember one of them saying, "No, no, I want to go back to `Ewa School."

I said, "We can't go back. We can't go back, we don't live there anymore."

And so, I remember, we had to go and re-register them at Wai`alae, yeah, both of 'em at Wai`alae School.

MK: And you went to . . .

RY: And I went back to Kaimuki Intermediate School.

MK: And how did you folks feel about changing schools again?

RY: Well, the changing part, I guess, didn't affect us that much because then we got to see old friends, but then, at my age, there's a lot of questions. "Oh, how come you didn't come to school in the beginning, and now you're back again?" So a lot of questions went on.

I said, "I had to move back again." I didn't say that we got evacuated. I said, "We just moved back and so I have to come back to this school."

Of course, the Kawano children knew why we had to go back to the school. But then, the two boys [*Ruth Yamaguchi's brothers*] said, "Oh, I got to see my friends again." So I guess the adjustment wasn't as bad as when we had gone to `Ewa School, 'cause they got to see old friends again, and they got to meet classmates again, so that part, I guess, it wasn't that bad for the boys.

MK: And I was wondering, how come you didn't want to tell your classmates you were evacuated?

RY: I thought that was a real shameful thing that happened to us. I didn't know of anybody else in our neighborhood, in the Hind-Clarke Dairy, or at school, that I knew of that got evacuated. And I thought that it was something that we got punished for or that we got condemned for, and I just didn't want to tell anybody that we got evacuated. It was something that doesn't happen to an ordinary family. And I thought, gee, it was something like that we got picked on. I don't know, I had a real guilt feeling about that evacuation, as though we got picked on and it wasn't a normal thing, and that the rest of 'em were real lucky.

MK: And, you know, living in a small house with so many people, and people who are not your relatives, how were relations between your mom, your grandma and the Kawanos? How did things go?

RY: I felt sorry for Grandma, *Babachan*, because she kept blaming herself. Even after we moved, she kept telling me, "*Washi ga Nipponjin*" ("I'm a citizen of Japan"), you know. Already, you cannot convince her other than that, it is not her fault. I tried to tell her, everybody got out over there.

And I remembered the Zane family, and I think, I didn't know whether they got evacuated or what, but when my father said, "No, it's everybody."

I said, "*Bachan, ano Shinajin no family mo deta kara*" ("Grandma, because that Chinese family left, too"). You know. It's not her fault, it's everybody.

But then, *Jichan* Kawano was there. *Jichan* Kawano was a good companion. I somehow did not know that *Jichan* Kawano lived there too. I thought he lived next door, somewhere else, and he came to visit us every day. Miyoko tells

me, "No, *Jichan* Kawano lived there too." But he was such a quiet soul, and I remember, he used to always *opa* baby Eddie. And I remember, he would be puttering in the yard and he was good company for *Babachan*, because I could see *Babachan* getting real(ly) frustrated.

And my mother, being like that, and in those days, it was hard to be a daughter-in-law to someone, to an issei mother-in-law. And I could see that, as young as I was. Maybe it was a good thing that Mom wasn't talking too much or anything, 'cause---and when you talk to her, sometimes you wonder whether she heard you or she just looked through you. And I thought maybe it was a good thing because even if *Babachan* said something, she probably wasn't listening. But *Jichan* Kawano usually kept *Babachan* busy, talking to her and keeping her company. And I mentioned that and Miyoko did say, yeah, *Jichan* and *Babachan* turned out to be good companions, you know. They kept each other company and they had a world of their own, so that was good.

But now, Miyoko, no matter how stressful it was and how things, how bad things were, she always looked after my mom and Kenny. She always took care of them. And she would just tell me, she used to call me, "*Mi-chan*." [*Mi-chan* is short for *Mitsue-chan*.] She would always tell me, "*Mi-chan*, just watch your brothers, you help me with your brothers."

But it's hard because the other Kawano kids were all teenagers too. Of course, there were young ones like Tommy. The one above that would be, I think, the same age as Irwin. There was one almost same with Richard. But Nancy was the same age as I was, and one was same age as Helen, and the oldest son was same as my oldest sister. And naturally, at that age already, there would be squabbings going on. And it must have been hard for their parents too, 'cause arguments would come up because of our presence, and remarks would be made. And I would hear the remarks and I worry that, "I hope Mom didn't hear that. I hope Mom didn't hear that."

But you couldn't help it with that many people that there were times that Mom heard it. And Miyoko tells me she know Mom heard it because Mom would be crying. And she would have to comfort Mom and tell her, "Just ignore it. *Susoe-san*, just ignore it. Don't listen."

And she would take Mom away to her room. And I used to wonder why she would (always) take Mom to her room. And it was, I think, because something was going on and she just want Mom not to be exposed to that, so she would take her in her room.

So Miyoko did a lot for the family. And I tell, I even tell my sister, I think without Miyoko-*san*, I don't think Mom would have survived, or the baby. The baby was too sick and too weak. And that's why all my memory of his babyhood is that he was more on the brink of death than alive. But Miyoko just wouldn't let my mom give up. And the younger girls in the Kawano family, I guess because there was no baby other than Eddie, Kent was a



baby, so they want to carry him, and they would always help, yeah.

MK: And then, you know, in terms of economic support for your family, how was your dad managing to support the family? What was he doing during this time?

RY: It must have been hard because no matter what, even if he has the farm, there must have been a lot of restriction, limitation now. And so, what Dad did was, he worked on the farm and somebody told him that you could get stevedore job because all those ships coming in and everything. There was a great demand for stevedores, so Dad took a job.

(Visitor arrives. Taping stops, then resumes.)

RY: So what he did was take a job at night, doing stevedoring. But then, couple weeks later, when he came to visit Mom and us, we noticed he had pull down so much weight. He was real thin, and Mom started to, somehow, (even) in her condition, she realized that my dad was losing lot of weight, and she started to cry that he wasn't eating. That he just better come back over there. She just said, "Just leave the farm and come home to the Kawanos."

He said, "No, no." He said that he has a job.

But, in his condition, she cried. She said, "No, give up that job."

But he told her not to worry and that upsetted Mom again. And I remember, after that news, she('s) always in tears and telling me that, oh, how thin my father was and he's gonna get sick and what is she gonna do? And she told me to talk to Dad, but Dad said don't worry. Then the next time he came by, he said that, oh, he met a friend working at the stevedores too, and he has a apartment in one of those tenement houses (on) Fort Street. All those places had a lot of tenement houses and lot of the bachelors or families lived in there. Maybe just a little sink and one large room. Little tenement houses. And his friend told him, "Why don't you stay with me? Share the expenses and live with me."

So my dad moved out of the Japanese school. I told my dad, "Why don't you sleep on the farm during the day?"

But he said, "Oh no, no, no." He said there's no place to sleep and he's real afraid because the soldiers, with the rifle and bayonet, patrols all the farms. So he says, "I'm scared 'cause there's soldiers patrolling all the farm."

I said, "What do you mean, Dad?"

He said, "Oh, they're all over the farm, patrolling." So he said, no, he cannot sleep.

He moved out of the Japanese school, stayed with his friend (and) it got to be

where he fed the livestock, early, and left the farm in the afternoon, went to the tenement house, where his friend was, and slept there, so he was able to now sleep, and share expenses, the cooking and everything, the food, with his friend. So he was eating more now, or (eating) better. And he was able to go to work. And so things started to work out better and he wasn't losing that much weight either because he was getting more food and more sleep. So I noticed when he came to tell us that, he was doing that, he looked much better and Mom felt better. And he kept that up until when he was able to find us a little house on this Bishop Estate land on Farmers Road. But that's, I remember, must have been about seven, eight, nine months that we stayed with (the Kawanos). Every chance he had, he was looking for a place.

My dad had this property in Kaimuki, on Twenty-first Avenue, he had a home there, but he needed to rent it out to make it pay for itself. And unfortunately, the person renting that house was a naval officer. And when he went to see the officer if he could ask him to vacate the house because (of) the family, he was told, because of the martial law, he could not evict or ask anybody to vacate a house that had military people or defense workers. The martial law was that strong. It protected the military people and defense workers over the civilians, no matter what the situation was.

MK: Could he have raised the rent on this officer?

RY: No. I remember there was rent control that went into effect or something. So he came back and told us that.

MK: And then, you know, the house that you had at Pu`uloa, was it still occupied by soldiers . . .

RY: Yes.

MK: . . . during those seven, eight months that you were at the Kawanos' house?

RY: Oh yeah. 'Cause I kept asking my dad, "Did the soldiers move out?"

And he says, "No, they're still living in it."

The boys had a pet dog. And we couldn't bring that dog with us, it was just too much. And Dad said no, leave him on the farm, when he goes there he'll feed and take care (of him).

But then the soldiers asked my dad if they could have the dog, 'cause they were feeding the dog and they were taking care of the dog. At least they took care of the dog, and played with the dog and they fed him well. And so my dad thought (it over). He said, "You folks can have the dog."

But naturally when the boys heard that, "Oh, Dad is so mean! Gave our dog away." And they started to cry, that they want to have the dog there.

And my mom said, "You cannot bring the dog here." It's enough that the humans were there, imposing on the Kawanos. No way you gonna bring a dog.

Oh, the boys thought that was so mean. "You just gave our dog to the soldiers."

But my dad thought that would be the best, since they were good to the dog. And he was being well cared for. And he even told me, "Oh, the dog is so well fed, he's really chubby and roly-poly." The dog was better off than us.

MK: And then, with your dad going to, you know, Pu`uloa every day, seeing the soldiers at the house and patrolling, did he ever say how he was treated by the soldiers or any . . .

RY: No. He told us, although he was afraid of them, he said they did not bother him. Some were friendly, they would talk to him and ask him about the farm, but other than that, they did not bother him, nor threaten him. But just their presence there with rifles was threatening enough, you know. So he said he was scared of them, but he said that he made sure that he didn't antagonize them or anything. But he said they just left him alone. And he said some of them were nice.

MK: And all that time while they were living in the house, your dad could never get anything out of the house?

RY: No, no. No, he never, never set foot in that house again. From the time that we left, none of us ever set foot in that house again.

MK: And, you know, what happened to the other families, the other farmer families in Pu`uloa, at that time? What were their situations like?

RY: It was the same. Some of 'em who stayed at Honouliuli, I understand there was a relocation camp built with little houses, and my friend, Helene Kimura Minehira, said that her family was assigned a house. Some other families were assigned a house and they lived there. Each house had a alphabet and a number, she said she remembers. You know, maybe A-1 or B-2. It had numbers. And she said they all lived there. She said it was a small little house but at least, they stayed together. [*See Hawai'i Herald, Vol. 15, No. 4 for more information on Helene Kimura Minehira.*] And I always wondered why my dad did not get one of those houses for us. But then, it's too painful at this time to be bringing this kind of things up, so I just talked between my sisters. And I said it must be because Mom's condition and Kenny's condition, that it would have been of no help staying there, because he's not home, he's at the farm and he's working at night, stevedoring. So in case of emergency, there is no one available. There's no car, and where are we gonna go, rushing with the baby? And it must be that he must have thought it over that our chances were better at the Kawanos where we would have access to the Kawanos' help, in case baby needed to get to the hospital.

One time [*recently*], I did ask, "Dad, I understand there were homes there, and why is it that you didn't?"

"I don't know anything. I don't know anything about it."

So it seemed as though he wants to block out some things. And it (was) painful for me to bring things up because whenever I bring up those things---I said, "I need it for my [*redress*] statement, Dad."

"No, no. I don't know. I don't know."

So it must be his way of blocking things out. But it must be that it jogged his memory, because I see him crying.

MK: Thinking about it.

RY: Yeah, yeah. So then I told my sisters, "All right, I'll just rely on my memories." I said, "I think we better not bring too much of it up."

MK: And, you know, I know that you said the other families were in the same situation over there, they had to evacuate. Were there any families that were allowed to still stay in the area and . . .

RY: At that time, we didn't know who stayed back or who had to get out. And as I told you, the land area is so large and my dad tells me he don't dare go visiting to another lot, because he doesn't know whether the soldiers are keeping track where he went, who he visited. And I think that was everybody's fears, that they got kept track of, and you might endanger somebody else if you went to somebody else's home to talk, especially if you('re) Japanese. So he avoided that. So he said he never found out who got to stay behind, whether anybody lived there. But he did tell me, almost all of his neighbors and all the ones that he saw at the Japanese school, they went in at sunrise, and out by sundown, and back at the school [*Honouliuli Japanese-language School*]. 'Cause---and he would mention he remembers the Kimura family living [*there*], he said because they had three young girls. And he would mention another family that slept there. It must have been like a dormitory, everybody sleeps. But he said that it seemed as though almost all of them got out. I said, "By all of them, who do you mean?"

He says, "Well, I know all the Japanese family were sleeping with us at the school."

I said, "Well, what about the other nationalities?"

He said, "Oh, I don't know. I don't know where they slept."

So each don't know who got to stay behind or who lived there and didn't have to evacuate.

MK: I know earlier you mentioned that you told your grandmother, "No, no, *ano Shinajin no* [*that Chinese*] family," the *Shinajin no* family, the Zanes. Were they evacuated?

RY: My dad never found out whether they got evacuated. But then, when all this redress thing comes out, you would hear somebody else saying that, "Yeah, we used to see Walter Zane." But it's hard to say now, almost everything is hearsay and the principal person died. And somebody else who had another story, they passed away too. And it's just hearsay from their widows, so it's real hard. And we're told to be very careful when it's hearsay. So we couldn't say for sure.

MK: How about that beekeeper, the Caucasian beekeeper?

RY: Yeah, that's another thing. Somebody said that they saw this article about Mr. [*Leo R.*] Hannegan, and I got to read that thing, (dated in 1943) that---but there's no proof that he actually lived on his premises. We're trying to locate people who might know, but it seemed all the information we got is after the war. So he did help in the war effort where he produced wax for the military, and the honey, but whether to say actually that he was not evacuated, that's another matter.

MK: So when it comes to knowing about the other families, it's still kind of hard for you to know.

RY: Yeah. Because I had never gone back to that area. My dad could not remember. And like he said, he didn't dare go and visit other people with all the soldiers watching. And he felt that he would be endangering that person. Not unless they were out in the fields and they talked. But he said, in those days, he was really afraid to even stop by to talk to someone else, thinking that the soldiers might be thinking that they must be scheming or planning something. So he said he was real afraid, and he didn't want to cause any trouble for that person, so he avoided that. If there were any talking to do, I guess they did it at the school when they met at night.

MK: And I think you mentioned that there was a Hoshide family . . .

RY: Oh yes.

MK: . . . that kind of helped out the farmers?

RY: Yes. It seemed Mr. and Mrs. [*Yoshiaki*] Hoshide had access to their home in the early part. And when you live at the Honouliuli Japanese School and in a remote area like `Ewa and Pu`uloa, there is not such a thing as you're gonna go to the restaurant to eat, or you're gonna pick up food there. There's no such thing. And Mr. and Mrs. Hoshide were nice enough, she would cook breakfast. Mr. Hoshide, it seemed, was able to get some supplies, so every chance he got, he got supplies. And they would cook breakfast at least. And

knowing that my dad had no family with him, they fed my dad and they said there were a lot of bachelor boys, farmers, who were unmarried, who had property there, and they would feed them. My dad said, yeah, the Hoshides fed him breakfast.

MK: Was there a payment for the breakfast service or . . .

RY: That's what I (asked Dad). I said, "Dad, so how did you folks arrange that?"

He said, "No, the Hoshides never took any payment or anything. They just shared everything. They just helped and shared whatever they had."

I said, "Dad, weren't you supposed to pay?"

He said, "But they wouldn't take anything,"

I said, "Oh."

So couple weeks ago, I got hold of some documents (for) the Hoshides. I came across some documents and not knowing whether they had it or they didn't have it, I made copies and whatever documents we had, I collected it all and put it in an envelope and I told my sister, "I won't be at the [*Japanese American Citizens League redress*] meeting, so would you please make sure and find out which is the Hoshide family and pass this envelope."

And would you believe it, Mr. Hoshide calls me to thank me. He said, "Oh, we didn't have anything, you know. We didn't even know there was such a document. Thank you so much."

So I told Mr. Hoshide, you know, "I remember what my father said, that you folks were so good to him, feeding him." I said, "It's just a little thing that I can do now for you."

He said, "No, no. Don't feel that way. We did it to help each other out."

I said, "Well, Mr. Hoshide. We're all in the same boat now, we have to help each other out. So, I'm trying to help you folks now."

So---and they wanted to make payment. I said, "No, no." I said, "Everybody has to help out, yeah. So whoever comes across anybody's, one of the farmers there, when we see the name, we just get the copies for them in case they don't have it." So I said, "No, this is one means of helping each other out now. You folks helped my father, and I just want to do something for you folks." And they were so grateful.

MK: And then, I know that after seven---no, before I go into that, all this time, seven or eight months, living with the Kawanos, was your dad still paying for his farm and his land?

RY: My dad said that after that---no, the agreement was that within five years, the farmers would pay for it. And I asked my dad, "Did you make any kind of payment as you went along?"

And he said he doesn't remember. He said he may have made some payments, but he told me that he knew that he had to make all the final payment in 1945, and that's what the mortgage contract would be, that he has to pay in 1945. In other words, five years after he had signed that thing, that it was payable. But he said that he might have paid some initially when the house got built but other than that, he said he was—he didn't—he don't think he made any payment, because the farm was not paying off, now. Since they weren't fully established, they were all struggling. And by the time 1944 came by, when they got the eviction notice, formal eviction notice, he said everybody had to get out and he don't think that any payments—maybe some payments were made, but not the full amount, as agreed, because they were no longer there.

MK: Did he ever receive any compensation for his land loss or . . .

RY: No.

MK: . . . property loss?

RY: No. No. I said, "Dad, you have to think real good."

And he says, "No. I would've remembered that." He said, "I would've remembered that." He said, "No, we all took a loss." He said he don't think anybody got paid.

But I understand there were some families that might have gone through lawyers after the war and may have gotten some compensation, but my dad said he never got any. He said he's sure a lot of the farmers did not get compensated in any way.

MK: And then, after seven or eight months living with the Kawanos, what happened to your family?

RY: My dad finally found this small little house on [4561] Farmers Road and, would you believe it, one-half of it is where rich families lived in Kahala. And the back half of it is farmers, you know, and poor people, like my dad, trying to find a house. And he found a house and so finally we were able to move there. But we had no furniture. My dad was able to (get some) appliance(s) and things were hard to come by. Everything went into the war effort. And he was able to find this small, cute, little icebox. But Mom says, "Oh, that's good enough. Just so baby's formula can be kept in there," and some of the fresh things. And he was able to find a stove.

So---oh, that was luxury already. And he said, well---and he was able to buy a secondhand sofa, the kind of sofa that you pull out and got to be a bed. So,

oh, that was a---but nothing else, nothing else. And so he was able to find some lumber, and I think it must be his friend, made a makeshift table. So we said, "That's good enough, just to put the food on." And we told the kids, "You just get your plate and just sit on the floor." And, oh, that was a big treat for them.

So, it was an empty house with no furniture or anything, but everybody was so happy. Mom really took a turnabout in her attitude, in her health, when she found out—of course, she knew he had a job and he wasn't losing weight, or he was getting enough sleep now, better sleep than what he was, anyway. And now he found a house. Oh, she was so happy. And I guess when she accepted that and felt so much better, the baby, baby Kent started to improve. So I think mother and child('s) ties are so strong, that baby must feel his mother is not well. Mother feels baby's not well. But I was so surprised and I thought to myself, that, oh, it's such a miracle. And that's the first time I ever thought about miracles happening. I said, "Wow, what a miracle." And on the second thought, I said, "Oh God is really,"—we're not a religious family. My family, my parents believe more in Buddhist. But some of us tended more to Christianity. But I really thought, oh there is a God who is taking care of us. And that was the first time I thought about miracles and that God really took care of Mom when I asked him to take care of Mom, you know. 'Cause she started to improve. Yeah, she really started to improve. And naturally, Kent started to improve.

MK: And your dad was still going back to Pu`uloa at that time?

RY: Dad still had to go to Pu`uloa. I remember, to save time, he said he would still stay at his friend's place, 'cause it's closer for him to get there, and closer for him to get to the stevedore at the waterfront, 'cause it's right there from Fort Street. So he asked my sister, my oldest sister to move in, to help take care of the family. So now, Gladys moved in with us, to help take care of the family. And Mom really started to improve quick. Can you imagine, an empty house, but yet she was able to really improve, healthwise and even mentally, you know. She would know that she's talking to you. She knows that we're there. And I would, in my own way, I would test Mom. Then Mom would answer, and I say, "Oh, Mom, you have to get well, Mom."

And she say, "Yes," and she would thank me for helping with the kids, you know.

And then I thought to myself, no, Mom didn't lose her mind. I was so afraid that either Mom's gonna die or her mind went already. And it's a good thing fifty years ago I didn't know what Miyoko told me later. I think I would have just gone to pieces, if I had known that at that time. But I was thankful that Miyoko was compassionate and kind enough to keep that news away from me. Yeah.

MK: You had so much responsibility at that time.



RY: But you know, most of it, Miyoko(-*san* did it).

END OF INTERVIEW